

A Neglected Blessing

"Blessed is the man that considereth the poor." How consider? Shall it be to devise means whereby we may get the most from them for the least return? To pay them in "chips" and "whetstones" for hard labor? To pit our experience against their simplicity in one-sided contracts? To lure them into situations of helpless dependence upon us, and then abuse this power to their injury? To build up our fortunes by skillfully making great numbers of toilers tributary to us, and then exact, by legal methods of course, an extortionate share of the produce of their labor? Many fortunes great and small are soiled with the sweat of the poor, many others are stained with their blood. This is the way the world considers the poor, but there is no blessing coming out of it. The eye of the prophet can see rather the looming apparition of a curse. Blessed is he that considereth the poor. We know of but one right way:—put yourself in his place, and then apply the golden rule. Do to him, deal with him, exact from him as you would he should do to you were you in his place and he in yours.

A Difficult Task

But there are the fewest number of people who in business relations, or any other for that matter where self interest is involved, are capable of putting themselves intellectually, or with any accompaniment of moral purpose or of conscience, in the other man's place. The long training of utter selfishness which is the fundamental process underlying business methods forbids this kind of transposition, makes it impossible, brands it as a dangerous policy. You must not be able to see your neighbor's side of the question at all, even as much as common fairness and equity may demand, else how will you get the better of him in trade? There must be no friendships in business. There must be no weak yielding to generous impulses. There must be no trace of magnanimity in your conduct toward the poor. Even when the most pressing necessity forces him to make ruinous concessions you must not tell him that he is asking less for his labor or for his property than it is worth. You must take the high ground that all you are bound to give him is the least that necessity compels him to ask, and even that must go to him with all possible discounts and diminutions of value. This is a hard world for the poor, and it happens sometimes that even those who profess to follow the Master have learned the numerous and often scoundrelly arts of crushing, enslaving, bleeding and defrauding him. Of all such God will be the avenger, one day. How different from all the accepted maxims of the world was the Master's attitude toward the poor. "To

them the gospel was preached." He placed this statement at the climax of a long list of startling miracles. It was a miracle, truly, so different was it from the world's way, so unusual, so supernatural. But his great heart yearns over the oppressed, and because there are so many weary ones he hath created a heaven, and called it REST.

An Oriental Plant

Patience, the plant which springs from the soil of suffering, seems to be indigenous to the oriental character rather than the western. The serf of Russia, the Fellah of Egypt, the Pariah of India, the lower caste in all eastern countries, victims of long ages of oppression, display a remarkable stoicism which altho not modified and sweetened by the consolation of a Christian faith nevertheless often displays a pathetic beauty of resignation, conveying a lesson to the more favored ones who enjoy the privilege of gospel light and hope. When the utmost calamities come upon them, war, famine, pestilence, oppression, disaster of every sort, they calmly meet the crushing fate with quiet, uncomplaining fortitude, saying simply, "God willeth it. It is God, we can not resist him." But he that readeth the hearts may see a deep, perhaps unconscious trust behind and beneath this seeming indifference: It is God; he can not but do right. He will make it right.

There is a larger and more blessed elaboration of this comforting doctrine in our Christian faith. "All things work together for good to them who love the Lord." In the trials and troubles incident to this mortal life, whatever of sorrow, or loss, or pain, or disappointment, or bereavement may come to us, there is provided for our use an inexhaustible treasure of strength and comfort, the key to which is perfect, unwavering trust. The resignation of the heathen to inevitable fate may be the last stage of deep despair, but the resignation of the Christian may rise to the loftiest, sunniest heights of hope and victory.

Our National Conference

On another page of this issue will be found a communication from Brother Gillin touching the work of our National Conference which merits the most careful reading of all who feel an interest in the cause of the Brethren church. We can, if we will, make this coming conference the *best* in the history of the church since its reorganization sixteen years ago. And such we trust it may be; such indeed it ought to be. Unless it will be a better meeting than the last one it will not be as good. A conference in 1898 just like the one held in 1897 will not be as good a one. We know more than we did a year ago, we have had new experiences, and by this knowledge and experience we ought

to profit. If the work, the influence, the inspiration of our conference is to be felt throughout the entire brotherhood, then two things are necessary:

First, we need a good attendance. Such a delegation as Brother Gillen suggests from the several districts will carry back with them an enthusiasm, an inspiration, that will put new life and spirit into the entire conference district, and start it on its way with a vim that will repay tenfold the expense involved. A good representation of all the ministers in the church, a large delegation of young people from all over the brotherhood, a similar delegation of our earnest, self-sacrificing, devoted sisters, and of the Sunday schools in the brotherhood, the presence of all these at beautiful Winona for one week, taking home with them the power and spirit of the meeting will set the whole church on fire with an enthusiasm that will tell mightily for God and humanity.

Second, we need a good program. We are not going there for mere pleasure, a pleasure it will be, because it means hard work for the Master and that is always a pleasure. The presence of the entire membership of the church at Winona will not count for much unless we can have a well *prepared* and well *rendered* program. This is a necessity. The nature of our work is as we understand it twofold, educational and spiritual, instruction and inspiration. The subjects discussed should be such as will directly touch all the various phases of our church work and life. We need instruction, enlightenment, knowledge of the truth, knowledge of what we ought to do and knowledge of what we *can* do, rather of what God can do thro us if we let him. To arouse the emotions and create in the heart a desire to do without a knowledge of what there is to do can not result in permanent good; it is inverting the divine order. Hence we insist on instruction *first*, then enthusiasm, in fact the one will follow the other. Let the church be made to see her duty, the great work which the Master has given her to do, and the necessary enthusiasm will not be wanting.

The very best talent in the Brethren church should be called forth at the conference. Papers and addresses should be given on methods of general church work, young people's work, prayer meeting, sisters' work, missionary work, Sunday-school, and in fact on all the various departments and auxiliaries of the church. And let the thoughts on these several lines of church work be put on *paper*. There will be room for "off hand" addresses and speeches, but let these come in after the papers have been read. We want the best thought of the very best talent in the church put on paper. The man who is to give a paper on such an occasion is more likely to put his best into it. It will leave